



AUGUSTA COUNTY FIRE-RESCUE

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Chief Brown,

Below are notes that I received from students in the recent Fire Instructor II, 8th Edition pilot program in Augusta County. These notes were received from students that failed as well as some from ones that passed. I have already spoken to you via telephone with my concerns and you will see that several of them are also included in the memos received from the students. When the committee meets at the end of the month, I will share my concerns at that point. It is my understanding that other concerns have been brought forward so I will send these notes to those that received them from Battalion Joe Morris. Thank you for your time with this matter and I look forward to discussing it with the committee members.

Sincerely,

Chris Shaver, ACFR Training Captain

Student #1

To the VDFP:

This letter is in regard to the Fire Instructor II 8th edition.

I recently took the Fire Instructor II 8th edition pilot class. During this class we were asked to complete a project on a topic of our choice but it had to be approved by the instructors of the class. During this class we were taught the material that was needed to supposedly be able to put together our project. I feel the material was presented too fast for most of the students and that the material covered in the chapters was a lot more important than the students being able to take the material and put it to use for our projects. (it's a lot like SOL in our school systems today, cover the material and don't worry about whether or not the students get it or not) Several times we asked for help and because of the time frame for the class we were told to email our question and/or project to the instructors and we would get feedback. I did this and got feedback but I wasn't sure that I understood the feedback so in class that Saturday I sat down to ask a few questions about the feedback, the instructor did explain the comments that were made somewhat, but I was told that the instructors were not

supposed to be giving one on one feedback. This made me feel like I shouldn't ask any more question and made me kind of mad. I may have learned a few things from doing the project, but I really don't know how my project scored so low when I feel like covered to score sheet that we were given as a guide plus I sat down and compared my project to the outlines that we use when we teach FF1 and FF2.

I really don't feel this class was fair for the students and to quote the "Cone of Learning",

We only remember 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, 30% of what we see and etc. Don please think about this and determine where you feel this class in regards to the cone of learning. I feel like it's in the 10 -20% range. I hope that you will agree that this class isn't but together fairly.

Student #2

My concerns with this class were as follows:

- 1- There was much discussion amongst the instructors as to the time limit for each section and if everything was covered during the lecture.
2. The lead instructor never responded to myself on my project that was pre-submitted.
3. I have correspondence from the other instructors that stated that I was off to a good start with the project and they both gave me some instructions on what needed to be added.
4. My major concern is that I do not know what caused me to fail the assigned project. The projects are not returned with a score sheet to see where my shortfalls were.
5. I really don't think it is fair to have to make a whole project when in the real life; there are committees that review the programs before being implemented.
6. There was a lot of confusion in regards to the purposely used "Rubric" for grading purposes.
7. There was a lot of confusion in regards to the project and expectation. How can we improve if we do not have the ability to find out where we failed in our project?
8. VDFP has got to set a guideline in regards to scoring the projects. The current system has a lot of grey area in regards to the scoring mechanism.
9. I don't understand how I can be told off to a great start and then find out that I Fail after I made the additional changes.
10. Some class students never received feedback like was promised on their projects
11. Entirely too long for grading to be completed.
12. If you have two chances to take the written, then you should have the same for the project. All of time was put into my project to only fail.
13. The inconsistency in VDFP is producing a bad reputation amongst the instructors and fire service.

Student #3

The concerns I have with this last Instructor II class is as follows.

I felt the Lead instructor should have had better communications with the students. I also felt that she should have been at the test site with her students. I also feel that they cannot truly justify failing a student who at least attempted to do a project and turn it in on time, especially

since this was only the second class taught with this new layout. I myself put in a lot of time and work into my project and feel that I deserved at least a passing grade. This has to be one of the worst classes I have ever taken through VDFP.

Student #4

To whom it may concern:

This letter is in regards to the current iteration of the VDFP Fire Instructor II curriculum. At some points, the recent course offered at the Augusta County Fire-Rescue Training Center will be referenced for illustrative purposes. It is to be understood by both instructors and students alike that a small amount of obstacles will be encountered in the course of a pilot program. This could not be more apparent than in the class to which I referred.

Not only was there a distinct lack of consensus amongst the instructor cadre as to how certain elements of the didactic lesson should be taught, there was an equal amount of dissention about the direction that the final project should go in. Perhaps the most frustrating thing of all, from a student's perspective, was the lack of established criteria for the selection of a final project topic. It was more difficult than necessary to find a topic to suit the instructors' fancy. The response given in regards to many submissions by students was, "There's already a class for that". This is an unacceptable and poor response to give a student when they propose a topic, especially given the fact that there are classes available for virtually any topic in fire-rescue (and topics outside of the fire service, but I digress). It would seem that the students were expected to reinvent the wheel. To be fair, I do understand that the instructors wished for students to build their own program from the ground up. To that I ask, isn't it possible that the same goals of the class could be achieved through modifying an existing topic to suit the needs of a particular company/department? I believe the answer to that is yes.

There was also very little benefit to the classroom exercises, as they had virtually nothing to do with the final project. In fact, some of the feedback given during those exercises was terse and nearly condescending. It would be more constructive if the students were allowed to use that time to work on their projects, as that seems to have such an overwhelming impact on the likelihood of passing the course. It doesn't appear to make much sense to allow students to work together in class on an irrelevant exercise when they're forced to work on their final projects as individuals.

Finally, in regards to the project, it is extremely unfair to the students to assign them a failing grade with no explanation as to why they were unsuccessful. How can students be expected to improve their work when they don't know where their deficiencies were? The projects were completed with little to no assistance from the instructors. Students were given a rubric from which to draw guidance and construct their projects. Instructors were contacted by students in regards to constructive criticism, and none was ever given. Instructors were directly asked for this assistance, the students were promised it, but it was never received. In addition, it would seem quite unfair that students who failed the cognitive evaluation were given another attempt to pass it, but those that failed the project must retake the entire program. Overall, this was a poorly-

managed class that warrants reexamination by VDFP so that it may be elevated to the standards of their other courses.

Student #5

This is a letter to advise you of a few concerns that I have experienced with this class. I do understand that this was a "PILOT" Class and will continue to be adjusted during the next few classes. However, the classroom part was okay but would have helped a lot to have more examples to guide the candidates to what is needed to achieve the standards needed to pass the course. The Instructors would have been more helpful if they were held to the same standards of knowing the material like the other VDFP Classes are when the class is taught.

I feel there needs to be one or the other to pass this class with the written test or final project. There is so much time spent on the project there leaves very little time to study for the written test. How are you expecting anyone to pass the class after retaking it when the final project is submitted and graded but never sent back to the Level II Instructor candidate? I would never know what improvements that I need to make with the project without feedback. If the candidate retakes the class then the project would need to be on a different subject. I realize that not everyone is Instructor II material. I was really concerned and hurt when the lead instructor never showed up to collect the final project that I put my time and hard word into to pass this course.

Thank you for your time in hearing my concerns with this class.

Sincerely,

Fire Instructor II Candidate

Student #6

Instructor 2
Augusta County Fire Rescue

To whom it may Concern:

I have made a conscious effort to dedicate my life to the fire service as a professional firefighter in Augusta County, Virginia. Along with my sincere dedication to the fire service I have elected take the opportunity to enroll in numerous classes in my spare time to expand my knowledge base of fire and rescue services to provide the highest quality service to the community that depends on me. In order to share my training and abilities I also enrolled in instructor classes which will afford me the opportunity to train new professionals on techniques that will be instrumental in their future as a professional fire fighter.

The classes I have taken are approved by The Department of Fire Programs and until my latest experience I have with Instructor 2, I would applaud the efforts of The Department of Fire Programs and the instructors who have been instrumental in developing and teaching the approved courses. During the recent Instructor 2 Class our class had the task

of creating lesson plans and developing training techniques for future instruction. The instructors provided very little guidance and quite frankly placed the class in an environment where they expected failure.

As true leaders, we pooled our resources together and provided materials that were repeatedly rejected by the instructors who put forth no effort to provide us with additional guidance, input or support. The instructors treated us like bullies relishing the fact they had the ability to set us up for failure. I am not certain what thrill they got out of their actions. However, their actions are an embarrassment for the Department of Fire Programs and the fire service as a whole.

As a college graduate in the education field, I understand the need to create an environment for success to those who put forth the effort to succeed in class and life. During my college tenure, I received guidance on assignments and had dedicated instructors that thrived on seeing students succeed.

Not only did the instructors that represent this Department of Fire Program Instructor 2 Class fail to provide the necessary guidance for anyone in the class to succeed, they took pleasure in creating this negative environment. I am appalled that these individuals continue to have the opportunity to represent the Department of Fire Programs as instructors. The unprofessionalism displayed during this class was unwarranted and should not be tolerated. It is disheartening to have individuals like these represent the Department of Fire Programs that so many before us worked tirelessly to achieve the credibility of our profession and this program. Knowing that very few individuals who took this class received a passing grade is evident of the quality of instruction provided for this Instructor 2 Class. I strongly urge you to evaluate the performance of these individuals that are destroying the reputation of classes sponsored by the Department of Fire Programs.

